



Statement by

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House Committee on Homeland Security

Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight

Hearing on

Examining the Department of Homeland Security's Efforts to Recruit,

Hire, and Promote Veterans

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Room 311

2:00 pm

Thank you, Chairman Carney, Ranking Members Rogers and Members of the Subcommittee. It is an honor to appear before you to update you on the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) accomplishments and new initiatives to recruit and hire more of America's veterans.

Over the last year, and even since the last time we met, we have made great progress in reaching out to veterans and in recruiting and hiring disabled veterans. We are pleased with the positive results we have seen from our efforts and we are committed to doing even more in this area.

Prior to joining DHS, I worked at the Office of Personnel Management where I had oversight of many veterans' initiatives. Since arriving at DHS in September 2006, I have used that experience and have worked to ensure we fully utilize as many programs as possible to improve our veterans' outreach efforts.

Veterans Have the Talent DHS Needs

At DHS, we value the experience, commitment and work ethic that veterans bring to the job, as well as their significant skills and abilities. Their military backgrounds and training are well suited for DHS jobs – and most importantly – to accomplishing our critical mission. We are proud to provide opportunities to those who wish to serve their country a second time

The training, experience, resourcefulness and work ethic veterans bring to the job enable them to take on challenges beyond the task at hand. This unique combination makes them particularly well-suited for a number of Mission Critical Occupations across DHS. The chart below provides an illustration of the number of veterans in some of our Mission Critical Occupations.

Veterans Serving in DHS Mission Critical Occupations

Component	# of Employees	# of Veterans	% Veterans
U.S. Customs and Border Protection			
Border Patrol Agents	14847	4044	27%
CBP Officers	18495	5429	29%
U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement			
Criminal Investigators; Deportation Officers; Detention/Deportation Officers	5351	1872	35%
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center			
Investigator Instructor	564	277	49%

DHS Veterans Outreach Initiatives

At DHS, we are working on numerous fronts to reach out to veterans. I would like to update you on our progress and share with you some results from this past year.

On October 9, 2007, my office, working in collaboration with our Office of Public Affairs and Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), launched a "one stop" website for veterans seeking employment with DHS. This website contains current DHS job listings, application

information and requirements, an e-mail box for inquiries and submitting documents and a “converter” to help veterans identify which civilian occupations correlate to their military occupation specialties.

On November 6, 2007, we hosted the first DHS Veterans Outreach Advisory Council. Composed of military representatives and representative from veterans support organizations, such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America, the Council will advise us on the effectiveness of our veterans outreach efforts on an ongoing basis. We believe this is the first Council of its kind in the federal government.

In addition to these unique initiatives, we continue to conduct specific, targeted outreach efforts. In the past fiscal year, collectively we have participated in approximately 130 outreach and recruitment events, many targeting disabled veterans. Examples include:

- DHS was represented at Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis’ 4th Annual Veterans Care Day held in East Los Angeles on October 6, 2007. I personally sent our Department Recruitment Program Manager to the event.
- DHS Headquarters sponsored a second annual open house event called “Connecting with Your Future” on October 24, 2007. The purpose of this event was to provide Veterans, Veterans with Disabilities and Students with Disabilities with an opportunity to meet managers and supervisors from organizations within DHS, and to obtain information about career opportunities.
- Representatives from DHS components attended the *New York Times*’ “Annual Salute Our Heroes: Veterans Job Fair & Career Expo” held November 6, 2007 in New York City. This is sponsored in part by the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS).
- We also had representation at the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Veterans Conference in Orlando, Florida, over the Veterans Day weekend.

Finally, we are conducting enhanced training for the Department’s HR specialists in the areas of veterans’ employment programs, authorities and rights. We will establish a network of specialists in this arena dedicated to helping veterans join the DHS team.

Our objective in all of our efforts is to increase our ability to recruit veterans, and I am pleased to report that we are seeing progress. Over a one-year period ending this past June, we used the following veterans’ employment authorities to hire 591 veterans:

- Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA): **408**
- Veterans Reemployment Appointment (VRA): **144**
- 30% or more Disabled: **39**

Operation Warfighter Program

DHS, under the leadership of CRCL, is very proud to have been among the first federal agencies invited to participate in the April 12, 2005 meeting on the pilot program that launched the

Department of Defense's Operation Warfighter (OWF) program. The first OWF participants were placed within CRCL. OWF is a temporary assignment program placing severely wounded service members undergoing rehabilitative services at Walter Reed Army Hospital or the National Naval Medical Center on detail assignments with federal agencies in the greater Washington, D.C. area. This program provides active duty wounded service members with an opportunity to explore their skills, start networking, experience a meaningful activity outside of the hospital environment and begin a formal transition back into the workforce. OWF is a collaborative effort between DoD and DOL/VETS.

In December 2005, DHS expanded its participation to include permanent placements of OWF participants seeking to continue their public service in civilian careers. Since inception, DHS has placed 36 OWF participants in components, of which 19 were placed during FY 2007, hiring five permanently. DHS also assists wounded service members in their search for employment with locations in or near DHS field offices if they decide not to remain in the DC area upon release from Walter Reed Army Hospital or the National Naval Medical Center.

DHS components continually work with Operation WarFighter personnel and other organizations to match veterans to careers in the Department. CRCL provided the OWF Project Manager with a complete listing of major components and sub agencies that is used to attract wounded service members to DHS from Walter Reed Army Hospital and the National Naval Medical Center.

DHS officials actively participate in OWF bi-weekly Briefings, Transition Assistance Program sessions and career fairs at Walter Reed Army Hospital and the National Naval Medical Center. On June 20, 2007, Secretary Chertoff hosted a barbecue for Operation Warfighter participants and their families at the Nebraska Avenue Complex. And as indicated earlier, on October 24, 2007, DHS Headquarters Office of Equal Employment Opportunity hosted their second "Connecting with the Future" event to provide veterans and veterans with disabilities with the opportunity to meet DHS managers and to obtain information about career opportunities. All DHS components were invited to participate.

Results

- We employ over 40,000 veterans at DHS.
- The number of veterans hired in FY 2006 (3,015) was double the FY 2005 number (1,497), and in FY 2007 we increased the number of veterans hired (6,013) by an additional 100%.
 - U.S. Customs and Border Protection hired almost three times as many veterans in FY 2007 than FY 2006.
 - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement hired almost three times as many veterans in FY 2007 than FY 2006
 - The Federal Emergency Management Administration hired more than twice the number of veterans in FY 2007 than FY 2006.

- We also significantly increased the number of disabled veterans hired in FY 2007.

Conclusion

The Department recognizes the importance of fully utilizing the talents, skills and work ethic of our veterans in meeting the DHS mission of securing the American homeland. I hope you can appreciate how much we value the experience and character of those who have already served their country and wish to continue to do so with DHS.

My office plays an important role in ensuring and supporting DHS' capacity to build and sustain a high-performing workforce and provide programs to give employees at all levels the knowledge and tools they need to drive mission success.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued support of the Department of Homeland Security and the programs that support our employees. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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